

Neighborhood House Charter School

Substance Use Prevention and Education Policy

Adopted October 2016

I. Goals

The Neighborhood House Charter School (NHCS) is deeply invested in the safety and wellness of our students and believes that these are prerequisites to student learning. Recognizing that, like many states across the country, Massachusetts is facing a growing epidemic of opioid addiction, NHCS is committed to supporting our students who may be at-risk of or struggling with substance use disorders, educating students about the dangers of substance abuse, and maintaining a safe and substance-free environment at our school.

II. Curriculum for Grades 5 to 12

NHCS will adopt and implement a substance use prevention curriculum for grades 5 through 12. The curriculum shall be:

- a. Evidence-based
- b. Culturally competent
- c. Developmentally appropriate

NHCS will solicit student feedback about the curriculum.

III. Intervention Provisions and Treatment Opportunities

NHCS has a team of employees known as the Student Support Team. The Student Support Team works to identify students and families in need of individualized supports and services and develops a plan to provide those supports and services on a case-by-case basis. This interdisciplinary team is made up of the Director of Special Education and Student Support, Principals, Director of Student Affairs, Family Outreach Coordinator, social worker, school psychologist, and the school nurse. The team consults with classroom teachers and specialists to address the needs of students and families.

In addition to providing direct services to students and families on-site at NHCS, Student Support staff advocate on behalf of individual students and their families. The staff works with pediatricians, behavioral health providers, and other specialists

as well as with health and social service agencies to ensure the best care possible. NHCS and the Student Support Team work in close collaboration with families to ensure that they receive whatever health and mental health supports they require. NHCS has partnering relationships with many agencies and works to link families to appropriate services. Some clinical services are provided directly on-site at NHCS. All information gathered from families, students, and teachers by the Student Support Team is confidential information that will not be shared with third parties unless required by law or authorized by the student or eligible parent.

When a teacher notices any of the warning signs of substance abuse in a student, the teacher should notify his or her Student Support Team contact as soon as possible.

WARNING SIGNS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Physical warning signs of drug abuse

- Bloodshot eyes, pupils larger or smaller than usual
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
- Deterioration of physical appearance, personal grooming habits
- Unusual smells on breath, body, or clothing
- Tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination

Behavioral signs of drug abuse

- Drop in attendance and performance at school
- Unexplained need for money or financial problems; may borrow or steal to get it
- Engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors
- Sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies
- Frequently getting into trouble (fights, accidents, illegal activities)

Psychological warning signs of drug abuse

- Unexplained change in personality or attitude
- Sudden mood swings, irritability, or angry outbursts
- Periods of unusual hyperactivity, agitation, or giddiness
- Lack of motivation; appears lethargic or “spaced out”
- Appears fearful, anxious, or paranoid, with no reason

NHCS will provide professional development to teachers to ensure understanding and awareness of the Student Support Team process as well as the warning signs of substance abuse.

IV. Discipline and Enforcement Provisions

NHCS strives to nurture a positive and safe school culture by understanding students' behaviors through various contexts. By building a strong sense of belonging within the NHCS community we are working to support individual development along with social responsibility. Behavior management practices at NHCS rely upon our meaningful connections and strong relationships with students. Consequences that help to change behaviors are utilized and are determined based on the nature and

frequency of the infraction along with the needs and well-being of the entire school community.

Within this context, NHCS strictly prohibits the possession, use, or sale of tobacco, alcohol, and controlled substances, and the misuse of any prescription or over-the-counter medication on school campus or at school events (including on transportation to and from school). Students who are determined to be in violation of this prohibition may be subject to suspension or possible expulsion. Teachers are instructed to immediately report any possible alcohol, drug, or substance-related behavior to the Principal and Student Support Team.

V. Parent/Guardian and Student Involvement

NHCS will provide opportunities for families to be involved in the prevention of substance use. When a student is identified as at-risk or struggling with substance use, the Student Support Team will work closely with parents and guardians to develop an intervention plan. Aside from targeted interventions for particular students, NHCS will provide fliers, links to resources, parent education nights, or other opportunities for all parents to learn more about topics related to substance use prevention.

VI. Periodic Review and Revision of the Policy

NHCS shall review this policy at least every five years and make any revisions necessary.